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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6610
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0345
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 7328
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 5443
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3964
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1264
RUEHN/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 4032
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3118
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 7920
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5569
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0360
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2258
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
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RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS, TREASURY FOR LESLIE HULL, MCC FOR S GROFF, D TETER, D NASSIRY AND E BURKE, USAID FOR R HOWELL/ANE/IR, ELIZABETH HUME/CMM, BARBARA SMITH/DG

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SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: USAID LAUNCHES NATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTION PLAN

REF: COLOMBO 000779

¶1. SUMMARY: The final version of the USAID-sponsored National Anti-Corruption Action Plan (NACAP), which outlines key steps the Government and private sector can take to address corruption, was presented at the Bandaranaike Memorial International Conference Hall (BMICH) on July 28 as part of the National Conference on Anti-Corruption. The event, including a speech by Charge, received broad television and newspaper coverage. The NACAP is a key component of the USAID-sponsored Sri Lanka Anti-Corruption Program (ACP), designed to help the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) and civil society organizations combat corruption and monitor the use of tsunami and other government expenditures. While events such as these help raise awareness of the issue and create public demand for better governance, the lack of senior-level GSL participation in the event may signal a lack of political will that may limit progress in combating the problem. End Summary.

LAUNCH OF ANTI-CORRUPTION ACTION PLAN

¶2. The final version of the NACAP was presented at the BMICH on July 28 as part of the National Conference on Anti-Corruption. The NACAP, drafted over the past 18 months by the Anti-Corruption Program's Consultative Council, outlines steps that the Government, civil society, private sector, media, and donors can take to improve accountability and reduce corruption. The audience included NGO and civil society leaders as well as members of the legal community. The event was initially planned as an opportunity to present the NACAP to high-level GSL officials. However, despite intensive efforts by Embassy to recruit a senior official to receive the report, none of the high-level invitees attended. The event, including a speech by Charge, received broad television and newspaper coverage.

PLAN'S ORIGIN: PART OF TSUNAMI RELIEF

¶13. The NACAP is a key component of the Sri Lanka Anti-Corruption Program (ACP). The ACP was designed to help the GSL and civil society organizations combat corruption and monitor the use of tsunami assistance funds. As part of its \$135 million tsunami recovery and reconstruction program in Sri Lanka, USAID provided \$2.3 million to the ACP. Key ACP partners include the Auditor General's Department and the Commission to Investigate Allegations of Bribery or Corruption. The ACP has been involved in conducting more than 100 workshops, seminars, and conferences in tsunami-affected districts, raising public awareness of

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corruption through broadcast TV, radio spots, and children's books, and collaborating with the Auditor General's Department on new methods and techniques of investigative auditing.

CIVIL SOCIETY DECRIMES PERVERSIVE CORRUPTION

¶14. At a May 2007 roundtable hosted by Ambassador (reftel), participants from government, civil society organizations, the private sector, and media described corruption as endemic at all levels of Sri Lankan Government and widespread in dealings between business and government. Participants noted a pervasive culture of corruption, coupled with lack of public awareness of its consequences, and agreed that existing anti-corruption bodies lack the financial or institutional strength to effectively address the problem.

¶15. COMMENT: The lack of high level Government participation

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at this event was disappointing and is symptomatic of the lack of political will lamented by civil society activists. Events such as these, however, help raise awareness of the issue, sensitize the public, and hopefully, create public demand for better governance.

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